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TS # 185876

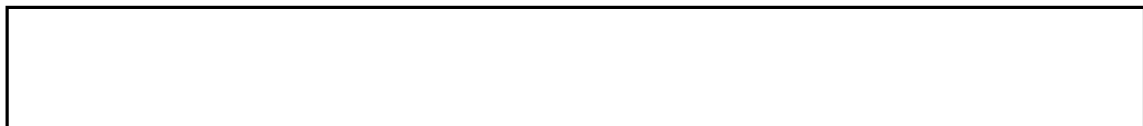
26 July 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Antisatellite Capabilities

1. The most recent National Intelligence Estimates concerning Soviet air and missile defense deal also with Soviet capabilities and intentions to develop and deploy antisatellite weapon systems. We have reviewed this part of the estimates and consider it still generally valid. In the latest paper* we reached the following major conclusions:

- The Soviets have an incentive to develop such a system, and are almost certainly investigating its feasibility.
- They could probably develop a limited capability within a few months, using existing ballistic missiles, radars, and nuclear weapons, but there is no evidence that they have decided to do so.



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-- The Soviets are now constructing a series of large, new radars, most of which will probably be completed in 1966; some or all of these will probably be linked together as a space surveillance system.

-- Considering the power, placement, and capabilities of these radars, we think the chances are better than even that the Soviets intend to provide themselves with an antisatellite capability as well.

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-- The decision to use an antisatellite system in peacetime, however, would present serious problems -- both political and practical.

2. This estimate was accepted by all members of the USIB with the exception of the State Department, which felt that the judgment that the Soviets were developing such a

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system was premature, and gave insufficient weight to the political consequences of its peacetime use.

3. The estimate was reaffirmed (again with a State dissent) last month, when we issued a revised and updated version of Intelligence Assumptions for Planning,

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4. In connection with your recent inquiry, we requested the Guided Missiles and Astronautics Intelligence Committee (GMAIC), to review the latest National Estimate concerning a Soviet antisatellite capability. GMAIC reported on 22 July that it found the estimate still valid.

5. The entire question of Soviet capabilities and intentions in this field will be re-examined in connection with the preparation of the forthcoming NIE 11-3-65, now scheduled for USIB consideration in November.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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26 July 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Reactions to the Soviets' Orbiting
Nuclear Weapons in Space

1. We have reviewed recent Estimates concerning Soviet capabilities and intentions to develop and deploy orbital bombardment satellites, and consider that they remain generally valid. In our latest estimate on this subject,* we reached the following major conclusions:

-- The USSR almost certainly is investigating the feasibility of space systems for use as offensive weapons, but we have no evidence that the Soviet leadership seriously contemplates a program to establish an orbital bombardment capability.

-- For the foreseeable future, we think that orbital weapons will not compare favorably with ICBMs in terms of effectiveness, reaction time, targeting flexibility, vulnerability, average life, and positive control.

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- In view of these considerations and political factors, the Soviets are unlikely to develop and deploy an orbital weapon system within the next five to ten years.
- We recognize, however, that the Soviets might reach different decisions as to relative cost, effectiveness, and political impact.
- If they should decide to deploy space weapons, we believe that they would regard them primarily as a means of supplementing existing forces, of introducing additional complications into US defense planning, and of supporting Soviet claims to strategic parity or even superiority, rather than as a decisive new system which radically altered the real relations of strategic power.

2. Our estimates have recognized that the Soviets have a present capability to place a nuclear armed satellite in orbit, and that, in view of its limited military effectiveness, the decision to do so would be based primarily on political and

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psychological considerations.^{1/} They have therefore taken account of such considerations as they affect Soviet intentions, and one estimate was devoted in large part to an assessment of world reactions to Soviet orbital weapons.^{2/} Its major conclusions were as follows:

-- The orbiting of a nuclear weapon might provide the Soviets with a potent psychological weapon, a "sword of Damocles," which seemed to hang over everyone's head in a way which, logic and military technology aside, ICBMs do not. The feat would stimulate respect for Soviet scientific excellence, awe of Soviet power, and fear of Soviet intentions.

-- But the Soviets would encounter a variety of adverse reactions; it would be charged in many quarters that the USSR had extended the arms race into a new and more dangerous area, and

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- ... in doing so had placed all countries, not merely its potential enemies, in peril.
- In Western Europe, which has long lived under the Soviet threat, many would be receptive in time to official assertions that the orbital weapon added little or nothing to existing Soviet capabilities.
- Official and popular opinion in most states allied with the US would expect and support US measures to counter the Soviet action; opinion in the nonaligned states would favor some form of "UN solution."
- Finally, the Soviets would have to consider whether it would serve their interests to risk strong US countermoves, including an ambitious US military space program and a general intensification of the cold war.

3. We believe that these judgments as to probable reactions to a Soviet orbital weapon remain generally valid. Further, we note that since they were made the USSR has endorsed the UN resolution against nuclear weapons in space;

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action contrary to this resolution would add to the adverse political effects noted above. We intend shortly to re-examine our estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions. In doing so, we will take into account such new developments as the

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Brezhnev's recent reference to "orbital rockets," and the general worsening of Soviet-US relations. We are now undertaking such a re-examination in the preparation of NIE 11-8-65, "Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Attack," which is scheduled for USIB consideration in September.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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